A cordon is a visible barrier used by an authorized institution to restrict and manage access to and from a given site during critical situations.

Objective: To investigate the meaning of cordons, their use and implications in post-earthquake scenarios through lessons learned from past experiences in New Zealand

Research Design: Qualitative Case Study approach, Figure 1 and 2

Data Collection: 21 expert interviews of key informants of varying profession (Emergency managers, Council representatives, Communication managers, Insurance and Business representatives, Police)

Methods: Interviews transcribed, coded in Nvivo and analysed Inductively


Christchurch Eq. Feb 2011

Figure 1 Cordon around Molesworth street
Source: Wellington City Council

Figure 2 Different Phases of Christchurch cordons, Source: Hatton et al. (2012, p.29-30)

Results and Conclusion

Post-Quake Cordons

- Cordons are established primarily for life safety and security of place. It can be adapted to support recovery by creating a transition space to expedite demolition and construction activities
- Broadly, it can be synthesized and viewed based on two key aspects, ‘decision-making’ and ‘operations and management’, which overlap and interact as part of a complex system
- The underlying complexity arises in large part due to the multitude of sectors it transcends such as housing, socio-cultural requirements, economics, law, governance, communication, insurance, evacuation, available resources etc.
- The complexity further increases as the duration of cordon is extended
- External parameters such as ‘acceptability of risk’, ‘situation awareness’ and ‘scale of disaster’ not limited to cordons also influence cordons decision and operations